

Sites endangered

It is with regret that I read of the destruction in Collingwood Township of the 130-year-old house built by Sir Sandford Fleming (Built By A Railway Pioneer, Historical Home Bulldozed — Feb. 16).

However, it is with greater concern that I view the possible loss of the two sixteenth-century Indian village sites if the historic park that was to include that house is not created.

Those village sites were once lived in by the Petun or Tobacco Indians, so named because they provided the Huron with tobacco grown by people living farther south. The story of the Petun is "written in the dirt" of archeological sites. Unlike their Huron neighbors to the east (who called them Ekhiionnontateronnon, "people of the mountain"), we have very few descriptions of the Petun at the time of first contact. Although descendants of survivors of that dispersal live in Oklahoma, the Petun no longer exist as a people. Their language is long dead.

The village sites must be preserved for archeologists, students and the general public to learn from. They present an important chapter in the story of Canada. Compared to the unique cultural contribution of that chapter, the value of another subdivision (the reason for the destruction of Sir Sandford Fleming's home and for the possible loss of the sites) is that of a real estate flyer received in the mail.

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